The Cleveland Museum of Art

Cleveland Museum of Art Collaborates with Regional Foundation to Expand Reach into Cleveland's West Side

News Release
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The Transformer Station will provide additional venue for contemporary art in Northeast Ohio

CLEVELAND (September 16, 2011) — The Cleveland Museum of Art and the Fred and Laura Ruth Bidwell Foundation today announced a collaboration that will bring additional exposure for contemporary art to Northeast Ohio and for the first time in its history expand aspects of the museum's programming and exhibitions to dedicated space outside of its University Circle campus. Titled the Transformer Station, this new arts venue takes root in a former transformer station built in 1924 at 1460 West 29th Street in Cleveland's Ohio City neighborhood. Construction will begin immediately to restore the original building and build an expansion, designed by Process Creative Studios in Ohio City, with a total footprint of nearly 8,000 square feet when completed. The facility may open to the public as early as fourth quarter 2012 with its first programs and exhibitions.

The Transformer Station's original building is one of sixteen substations built by Cleveland's one-time private transit provider, the Cleveland Railway Company. This facility converted power for the Detroit Avenue Streetcar Line, which carried 19 million riders annually at its peak. The building was used as a transformer station until 1949, when the City of Cleveland offered it for auction. From the early 1980s until 2010, it housed an art foundry. Its location on West 29th Street will allow for close coordination and collaboration with the exciting developments happening in the Ohio City and Detroit Shoreway neighborhoods, which include the Market District and Gordon Square Arts District.

"The Cleveland Museum of Art's programs and exhibitions at the Transformer Station will enhance the museum's reputation as not only one of the top five comprehensive art museums in the United States but also a leader in presenting the art of our time and interfacing with the community in creative, unexpected ways," said David Franklin, director of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

"The Transformer Station will be an exciting new space for contemporary art in Northeast Ohio. A place for living artists to stage provocative exhibitions and installations in a lively, diverse urban cultural context," said Laura Ruth Bidwell, co-founder and director of the Bidwell Foundation.

The Transformer Station will be initially owned and operated by the Fred and Laura Ruth Bidwell Foundation and the calendar of events and exhibitions will be shared by the Bidwell Foundation and

the Cleveland Museum of Art. Initially, it is planned that the foundation and the museum share the space on an annual basis for six months each. This will allow the museum to present at least two shows per year of three months duration each respecting a typical calendar of exhibitions. As part of its long-term commitment to the arts and culture of the region, the Bidwell Foundation has promised the Transformer Station facility and property as a future gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art in fifteen years.

"The Transformer Station will act as a laboratory and think tank for the museum's creative thinking, experiences and aspirations. By encouraging a more spontaneous development of displays, museum curators will be able to take more risks and can explore radical ideas," said Franklin. "Our participation in creating the Transformer Station signals the initiative of the museum to awaken and become more attentive to programming as our campus renovation and expansion in University Circle reaches completion and new exhibition spaces become available there too."

The Bidwell Foundation has a special interest in contemporary photography and photo-based art and will stage exhibitions from time to time at the Transformer Station drawn from the Fred and Laura Ruth Bidwell Collection. Additionally, the Bidwell Foundation anticipates commissioning photographers and curators to develop shows for the space and developing programs or events to complement or support activities of other organizations in the Ohio City and Detroit Shoreway neighborhoods.

"Laura and I were inspired by the vision of the museum's new director to strengthen the museum's reputation in the field of contemporary art," said Fred Bidwell, co-founder and director of the Bidwell Foundation and a member of the museum's board of trustees. "We believe that leading museums in the future will act as producers of programming that engage the community and encourage innovation and creativity in many different ways and locations. Laura and I are pleased to collaborate with the museum to enhance its mission and share our passion for the arts."

About the Fred and Laura Ruth Bidwell Foundation

Fred and Laura Ruth Bidwell founded the Bidwell Foundation in early 2011 in order to support artists and arts institutions by sponsoring projects, programming and exhibitions that encourage creativity and innovation. The foundation is awaiting its 501(c)(3) status. The foundation takes a particular interest in bringing leading photo-based artists to Northeast Ohio and toward this goal has worked with and provided instrumental funding for the University of Akron, the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, the Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College, the Akron Art Museum, SPACES Gallery, the Sculpture Center of Cleveland, the Inter-Museum Conservation Association and the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Both Fred and Laura have made long-term commitments and offered voluntary leadership service to the Akron Art Museum and the Cleveland Museum of Art. Laura Ruth Bidwell is a painter,

photographer and videographer who has exhibited widely in Northeast Ohio. Laura was the first gallery director of Summit Arts Space, a community arts space adjacent to the Akron Art Museum. Fred Bidwell is the Executive Chairman of JWT Action, formerly Malone Advertising, located in Akron and part of WPP Group, the world's largest communications services organization. As collectors of photo-based art, the Bidwells have a particular interest in buying the art and supporting the projects of living artists. More information on their collection and recent acquisitions can be found at www.bidwellprojects.com.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [1].

Transformer Station Announcement (video) [2]

Press Announcements [3]

Source URL: https://www.clevelandart.org/about/press/cleveland-museum-art-collaborates-regional-foundation-expand-reach-clevelands-west-side

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